

Message Text

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FOR LABOR ATTACHE

FOL REPEAT HELSINKI 1794 SENT ACTION SECSTATE
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE HELSINKI 1794

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB
SUBJECT: US DELEGATION PROTESTS POLITICIZATION OF FIET

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1. LEADERS OF U.S. DELEGATION TO EIGHTEENTH WORLD CONGRESS

OF INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF COMMERCIAL, CLERICAL AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES (FIET) IN HELSINKI AUGUST 26 PROTESTED WHAT THEY VIEW AS CONFERENCE'S ANTI-AMERICAN POLITICAL BIAS BY DECLINING TO STAND FOR RE-ELECTION TO FIET POSTS, INCLUDING FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND FOUR NORTH AMERICAN POSITIONS ON EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. IN ADDRESS ANNOUNCING POSITION, HEAD OF U.S. DELEGATION AND FIET FIRST VICE PRESIDENT JAMES HOUSEWRIGHT (RETAIL CLERKS) WARNED THAT USDEL "MUST HAVE TIME TO REASSESS OUR POSITION AND WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS WE CAN OR CANNOT MAKE TO THIS ORGANIZATION."

2. ISSUE AROSE OVER RESOLUTION CONDEMNING JUNTA IN CHILE WHICH USDEL INSISTED BE BALANCED WITH SPECIFIC CONDEMNATION OF TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENTS IN OTHER AREAS INCLUDING BLOC COUNTRIES. AT AMERICANS' INSISTENCE, TONED-DOWN LANGUAGE CRITICIZING RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM "IN MANY AREAS" WITH NO SPECIFIC COUNTRIES CITED HAD BEEN APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY IN RESOLUTION COMMITTEE BUT MATTER WAS RE-OPENED ON FLOOR OF CONGRESS AND CHAIRMAN (LORD ALLEN) SENT RESOLUTION BACK TO COMMITTEE WHERE COMPROMISE WAS SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED. CONGRESS THEN APPROVED RESOLUTION CONDEMNING ONLY CHILE.

3.

3. HOUSEWRIGHT TOLD CONGRESS HE FELT ITS RESOLUTION WAS A "DELIBERATE EFFORT TO EMBARRASS THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE." HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE IS ON RECORD AS STRONG SUPPORTER OF AFL-CIO CONDEMNATION OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN CHILE BUT SAID IT IS UNJUST OF FIET TO SINGLE OUT CHILE WHEN THERE ARE CASES OF TOTALITARIANISM IN OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING "RED CHINA". HE ALSO CRITICIZED OUTGOING PRESIDENT ALLEN FOR USING INCORRECT PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE DELIBERATELY TO RESURRECT THE RESOLUTION.

4. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH LABATT, HOUSEWRIGHT ACCUSED AUSTRIA'S HELMUT BRAUN OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES EFFORT TO OVERTURN US COMPROMISE BY WHIPPING UP SENTIMENT AMONG "PRO-COMMUNIST" DELEGATES. HE SAID USDEL HAD LONG BEEN TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY PRO-COMMUNISTS AND THAT IT WAS TIME TO PROTEST POLITICIZATION OF FIET BY THESE ELEMENTS. WHILE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT MAKING COMMUNIST CHARGE PUBLICLY, HE NOTED IN HIS SPEECH THAT "THERE IS A DETERMINED EFFORT TO INFILTRATE FREE TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS AND TO CAPTURE AND DESTROY THEM."

5. HOUSEWRIGHT MADE CLEAR IN SPEECH THAT USDEL NOT LEAVING THE CONGRESS OR FIET, ALTHOUGH LABATT GOT IMPRESSION THAT SOME MEMBERS WERE READY TO DO BOTH.

US NOMINATIONS WILL REMAIN OPEN UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE AMERICANS HAVE COMPLETED ASSESSMENT OF THEIR POSITION. HOUSEWRIGHT AND FELLOW AMERICAN UNION PRESIDENTS ALVIN HEAPS (RWDSU) AND HOWARD COUGHLIN (OFFICE WORKERS) INTEND CONSULT WITH MEMBERSHIPS AT HOME REGARDING FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN FIET.

6. PRESS WAS ABSENT FROM NOMINATION SESSION AND INITIAL REACTION WAS CONFINED TO SWEDISH LANGUAGE HUFVUDSTADSBLADET WHICH LED CONFERENCE WRAP-UP PIECE WITH FRONT-PAGE HEAD "USA-PROTEST AT FIET MEETING." STORY OMITTED HOUSEWRIGHT'S REFERENCE TO CHINA BUT OTHERWISE REPORTED FULLY. FIET HAS RECEIVED GOOD PRESS COVERAGE. CHILE RESOLUTION HAS BEEN ONLY POINT OF CONTROVERSY IN WEEK-LONG CONGRESS, WHOSE THEME IS "FULL EMPLOYMENT, INCOME SECURITY, AND HUMANIZATION OF WORK."
AUSTAD

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